

# ST. GEORGE'S MEDICAL PRACTICE PATIENT NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2023

## HELLO... AND WELCOME!

Welcome to the newsletter of the Patients' Forum for St. George's Medical Practice.

This Patients' Forum is a group of volunteer patients, carers and GP practice staff who meet regularly to discuss and support the running of their GP practice.

The Forum looks at the services the practice offers, patient experience and how improvements can be made for the benefit of patients and the practice. Each group is different, but they all have the aim of making sure that the Practice puts the patient & improving health, at the heart of everything it does.

## JOINING THE PATIENTS' FORUM

Our Patients' Forum is open to every patient on the GP practice list. People of all genders, ages, ethnicities, and those with health conditions and disabilities are encouraged to join. There are no membership requirements except that patients must be registered with the practice. Group members should as far as possible, be representative of the practice population.

If you are interested in becoming a member of St George's Patients' Forum, please contact Claire Bicknell or Malcolm Ginever for further information. Email – [claire@catena-network.co.uk](mailto:claire@catena-network.co.uk)

## *Inside The Issue*

### NEWS

The cost of living crisis, tips and tricks to alleviate the cost of living crisis.

### FEATURING...

12 days of Christmas!  
Twelve things to do this Christmas season.

### AWARENESS MONTH

Did you know...  
December includes Grief Awareness week! Keep reading for tips on how to handle grief during the Christmas season.

## 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS!

Christmas is a very special time of the year – and it's important to make the most of it! You can make special memories with your friends and family in so many ways, and there is always something fun you can take part in. Clear your calendars this December, there are heaps of things you can do to get into the festive spirit! In the spirit of the Twelve Days of Christmas, we present to you 12 different ideas for you to try this Christmas season. Plus, they're all quite cheap – so you can save money for the present buying!



## 1. Baking – Gingerbread cookies!



Now, who doesn't love a biscuit? Gingerbread is at the heart of all things festive, and there's no better way to start the month than baking some delicious treats for your friends and family. Even better yet, get them to help you make them. Decorate them however you like, with your favorite sweets; the more creative, the better. Follow this quick and easy recipe...

## 2. Christmas films and treats!

Once you've made your Christmas cookies (or if you've simply got your faves from the shop), the best way to eat them is whilst watching your favorite Christmas films. Why not have a movie marathon? Here are some recommendations for every mood you're in...

- Want to laugh with the kids? Watch *The Grinch!*
- Want a romantic feel-good watch? *The Holiday*.
- Like something a bit scary? *The Nightmare before Christmas!*

## 3. Decorate the house!

The best way to feel cozy and Christmassy without ever leaving your home is simple – get the decorations out! It doesn't exactly have to look like Santa's grotto, but a few pieces of tinsel can go a long way. Fairy lights can look cute both indoors and outdoors, whichever you would prefer. If you don't have any decorations you like, B&M and Poundland offer great cheap options.

## 4. Elf on the Shelf!

If you have kids at home, why not start a tradition – a common family-favorite Christmas activity for kids is *Elf on the Shelf!* Make your kids believe in Santa, as this Elf gets up to all kinds of mischief in the night while they're sleeping, and watches over them in the day, reporting back to Santa. At night, the Elf gets up to its own trouble; It could get tangled in fairy lights or leave floury footprints all over the kitchen counter. Parents do certainly also have a lot of fun with this one.



## Gingerbread recipe!

### Ingredients:

- 225g Plain flour, + extra for dusting
- Salt
- 2tsp Bicarbonate of Soda
- Ground Ginger
- Cinnamon
- 75g Unsalted butter
- 100g Soft Brown Sugar
- 100g Golden Syrup

### Method:

- Preheat the oven to 190C/170C fan/gas 5 and line a baking trays with parchment paper.
- Sieve the flour, salt, bicarbonate of soda, ginger, and cinnamon into a large bowl.
- Heat the butter, sugar, and syrup until dissolved. Leave the sugar mix to cool slightly, then mix into the dry ingredients to form a dough.
- Let the dough chill in the fridge for 30 minutes.
- On a flat surface, lightly dusted with flour, roll out the dough to a ¼-inch thickness. Stamp out the gingerbread men shapes with a cutter, then re-roll any off-cuts and repeat.
- Place your gingerbread shapes on the lined trays, allowing space for them to spread.
- Cook for 10-15 minutes, then remove from the oven and leave to cool.
- When cooled, it is time to decorate!

## **5. Fairy light walk/drive**

One of the best things about this time of year is the way our streets light up from Christmas decorations – Once you have decked out your own halls (if you'll pardon the pun), why not go explore your neighborhood and see how your community has got into the Christmas spirit? You can either go on a walk and get your steps up for the day, or if you'd rather not brave the cold, why not go on a drive? You can cover more ground and find the neighborhood with the best lights.

## **6. Visit the Nottingham Christmas market!**

An obvious option, but it's something that a lot of people often pass up on – don't miss out! If nothing else, it is a hub of amazing hot food and sweet treats to enjoy on a frosty December evening. They have unique food options such as Yorkshire pudding wraps, or cinnamon churros! Furthermore, they often have lots of stalls for gifts and knick-knacks that are ideal Christmas presents. They also often have an après lodge, where you can get a mulled wine or a beer to kick back and relax taking in the exciting atmosphere.

## **7. Christmas clothes!**

Christmas isn't just about buying things for others – why not buy something nice for yourself? Wearing Christmas themed clothes is a fun way to show your love for the holiday. The most common choice is Christmas themed jumpers, and an even more fun twist on this is to have an ugly Christmas jumper day – who can find the most outrageous design? Alternatively, for couples and families, why not get matching Christmas pyjamas that you can all wear on Christmas morning? Or at least wear them for a funny photo, you can even get matching sets that include a pair for the dog! Or if you want to start off small or opt for something cozier, why not invest in a pair of fluffy Christmas socks. Keeps your feet warm in the colder months and gets you in the holiday spirit.

## **8. Ice skating!**

Another fun activity that many often overlook even though this is practically the best month of the year for it! Ice skating used to be a popular activity during the winter months for centuries, however, it wasn't always restricted to ice rinks. Our ancestors used to do it on huge lakes, and even the river Thames! Now, we have a much safer environment to enjoy it in with friends and family. Whether you're a complete beginner or a natural, put your scarf and gloves on and take to the rink, it's a great form of exercise and so much fun.



## 9. Listen to Christmas songs!

Whilst it may seem like a simple activity, you can incorporate Christmas songs into your everyday life much more than you might think. Listen to it on the journey to work, or even at work if you're allowed to! A unique idea is using the more upbeat tunes for your gym workout; ever tried listening to Mariah Carey on the treadmill? Maybe you should try it! Alternatively, for you party animals, why not crank up some Wham! while you get ready to go out? It's a guaranteed mood booster, and you can only listen to it once a year, so make the most of it.

## 10. Make a Christmas hot chocolate!

Now, you may be thinking, how is a Christmas hot chocolate different to a regular hot chocolate? Well, there are many ways you can jazz up your hot drink to make it incorporate festive ingredients. Why not include some whipped cream, marshmallows, and even some cinnamon dusting on top? Alternatively, why don't you invest in some artificial flavorings? They are often very low in calorie and can add a nice new flavor – these include gingerbread, hazelnut, or caramel. These can be found in most supermarkets for relatively cheap prices. If you're over 18, why not make your hot chocolate more exciting – add some Baileys! It is well known for being a more-ish, tasty drink this time of year. Enjoy whilst watching your favorite Christmas film!

## 11. Enjoy the weather!

Whilst most people tend to avoid the weather in this season, a fun activity may be to do the opposite of this – why not embrace the cold, throw on your favorite coat and enjoy the frosty air? Depending on the weather, you can build snowmen, or have snowball fights with your friends and family, guaranteed fun for the kids. If that's not your thing, why not just take a walk down by the river Trent – it doesn't have to be long, but people tend to get less fresh air and less exercise this time of year, so try and combat this to keep your lifestyle as healthy as possible. Wollaton park has an excellent light show on, where they spend weeks setting up Christmas decorations using fairy lights! It's a fantastic experience, you can bring the kids or even go alone. It's not one to miss!

## 12. Make a photo album of past Christmas seasons!

This is something to pass the time that you can do individually or as a family, and it is a heart-warming idea as a present. Or even just for the sake of it, it's a great way to be nostalgic and reminisce on Christmases past. Furthermore, it's an especially significant activity to do if you're grieving someone that is no longer with us – it's a lovely idea to remember them at this important time of year. It's also a good reminder to take lots of photos at Christmas, as it's often the one time of year the whole family is together, so you should make the most of it!



### Easy Homemade hot chocolate!

- Place the milk of choice in a saucepan over medium-low heat.
- Whisk in cocoa powder and sugar, and heat until warm.
- Once the milk is warm, add some chocolate chips and whisk until melted.
- If you fancy, you can add some vanilla extract, peppermint, or cinnamon to spice things up!
- Serve immediately, topped with whatever your heart desires!



## SUPPORT WITH COST-OF-LIVING

With sharp rises in gas and electricity bills, on top of higher food prices, the cost-of-living crisis has unfortunately affected everybody. You do not need to suffer alone. If you are struggling to pay bills and essential costs of living, you may be entitled to help from the government. There are also many ways to save energy and lower your bills.

You may be entitled to up to three Cost of Living Payments if you get any of the following:

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income Support
- Pension Credit
- Universal Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit.

If you are entitled to these cost-of-living schemes, you could receive £300 in benefits.

By making your home more energy efficient, you could cut your bills down significantly. There are a few ways you can decrease electricity bills. For example, by having more energy efficient gadgets and appliances, such as energy-saver lightbulbs. You could also avoid wasted power by switching unused devices off at the plug. In addition, upgrading your gas appliances to more efficient models, or installing a smart thermostat so you can track gas usage. Washing clothes at a lower temperature, even just by 10°C could make the difference. By using a washing up bowl rather than using a running tap you could save around £25 a year!

Know that you are not alone, most people are feeling the negative effects of the cost-of-living crisis. Please do seek help if you are finding things difficult to cope with. You can talk to your GP if you are experiencing mental health problems. You could also receive support with organising your finances, claiming benefits and looking after your mental wellbeing on the Mind website.



### DOCTOR DOCTOR JOKE OF THE MONTH!

Patient: Doctor, doctor, I think I'm a Christmas Pudding....

Doctor: I have some cream for that!



# AWARENESS MONTH DECEMBER

*Grief Awareness Week*

Grief awareness week runs from December 2<sup>nd</sup> – December 8<sup>th</sup>. The week is meant to spread observation awareness and compassion for those going through grief. It also serves as a way to shine light on the support provided to people grieving and help better the understanding of the grieving process to the ones close to someone in grief. If you or someone close to you are currently dealing with grief, the Christmas season can be an especially difficult time. Here are some ways you can help:

## HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

- Seek support!
  - o For bereavement help you can email [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk) or call 080 8808 1677
  - o The NHS provides support for mental health for children and adults through bereavement, for information on all services, visit <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/>
  - o For children who have lost someone or someone who has lost a child visit <https://www.childbereavementuk.org> for help.
- Talking to others!
  - o Whether that is friends and family or a therapist, speaking to someone instead of bottling up your emotions is more profitable than you think.
- Sleeping and eating!
  - o Try to maintain a healthy sleep pattern for mental clarity. Having that stability in your day with an eating routine and a set bedtime can help keep a structure in your life and your mind healthy.
- Exercise!
  - o Keeping your body healthy by doing as much enjoyable exercise as possible helps keep you mind healthy.

## COMPASSION FOR OTHERS

- Be a good listener for those going through grief and offer words of comfort (but refrain from giving advice).
- People grieve in their own ways, accept their emotional swings.
- Help them seek the support they need. Could be from companies such as Mind or Samaritans.
- Do you know anyone alone this Christmas? Think about your grandparent or elderly neighbour that might be alone and invite them around or get them involved in your celebrations. Nobody should have to feel lonely, especially during Christmas time!

## MEET DR ALEX BRODIE



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### 1. Did you always want to be a doctor from an early age?

Not from an early age, but when I was 15/16, I was lucky enough to spend a lot of time in my local A&E department shadowing doctors and nurses and having lots of early hands-on exposure. This no doubt influenced my decision to come to Nottingham Medical School and pursue a life in medicine.

### 2. What is the best thing about being a GP?

You meet some amazing people, both patients and colleagues alike. There's never a dull moment and no two days are the same in General Practice. I am lucky to work with some highly motivated, hardworking, and very intelligent colleagues! I genuinely feel we do everything we can to improve the health of our local community.

### 3. What do you think is exciting in medicine at the moment?

I think the recent pandemic showed how quick to adapt and innovate the world of medicine can be at times. The production of vaccines in such a short time scale was really impressive for example. I also like to see the use of novel technologies such as robot assisted surgery- though I do hope they do not completely replace the human elements!

### 4. What is your key health tip?

So much of what we see is lifestyle related and many aspects are preventable/tweakable earlier on in life. I think developing good habits from an early age when it comes to what we put into our bodies is a vital part of enjoying a happy healthy life later on. Having said that, an elderly friend recently told me that they were "here for a good time, not a long time" so I suppose there's a balance to be struck. All things in moderation maybe?

*SGPF Members Roger Johnston and Chrissie Wells participated in a preview of an NHS App earlier this year, Chrissie & Roger report below: -*

## **NHS APP ROADSHOW**

The function of St. George's Patients' Forum is to encourage better communication between the Practice and its patients in order to support the practice and improve services. Over the past few months, Rushcliffe Borough Council has conducted NHS App skills sessions, aiming to empower patients in using digital healthcare effectively. Spearheaded by the Digital Inclusion Co-ordinators and hosted at various practices, these sessions seek to educate patients on harnessing the NHS App for their healthcare needs reducing the need for waiting in line or on the phone.

This happened at St. George's on 31<sup>st</sup> October in the waiting area, where patients aged between 45 and 60 were invited to take part. 35 patients responded and 17 attended on the day. They spoke to the Team (Kai, Cassie and Jackie, a Social Prescriber) primarily learning about three key App functions: repeat prescription ordering, self-help advice, and communicating with their surgery via '**Accurx** Online Access' (for more information, visit [rushcliffehealth.org/online-access](http://rushcliffehealth.org/online-access)). Of course, patients can also book appointments online.

Additionally, patients had a chance to raise queries they had about the app and were all encouraged to go away with their new knowledge and get to know the app in their own time feeling more confident using it. St George's wishes to encourage patients to use the 'Accurx online consultation' via their website or NHS app for conditions which do not need face-to-face consultations. There are currently two external systems that patients use, **Systmonline** and the NHS App – both have similar functionality. It is planned that **Systmonline** will be phased out, but patients will receive warning about this nearer the time.

These are a few of the comments the Roadshow Team received:-

"It was excellent, and I left feeling valued as a patient."

"Today's session was very informative. Kai was articulate & knowledgeable, well worth attending the session."

"Thought it was all so helpful."

"Offer this to more people and everyone in the community!"

Representatives of the Patients' Forum were also there to find out more about how patients use the websites and the Apps, what they use them for and asked for suggestions for improvement, all of which will be considered when designing these exciting services.

St. George's new website is still under development and the Patients' Forum is helping to ensure that it is as user friendly as possible.





## **WHAT ARE WE?**

The purpose of this newsletter is to encourage members of St. George's Medical Practice to engage with and join the surgery's Patient's Forum! Our goal is to create and update a monthly newsletter sharing relevant and helpful information from the practice.

## **WHO ARE WE?**

This is a collaborative project between St George's Patient's Forum and a group of students at Nottingham Trent University. Deputy Chair of the Patients' Forum Claire Bicknell is working closely with NTU's Dr Jenni Ramone and her BA English students Lydia Sewell, Felicia Bergfast, Ryan Palmer, Ilinca Moraru, Max Magistri, Alex Klocek, and Ellie Morrin.

## **SOMETHING YOU WANT TO SEE?**

If there is anything you would like to see in next month's edition – let us know!  
We aim to bring the practice together and create a newsletter enjoyable to everyone!

## **WANT TO GET INVOLVED?**

If you are interested in becoming a member of St George's Patient's Forum, please contact Claire Bicknell or Malcom Ginever for further information.  
Email – [claire@catena-network.co.uk](mailto:claire@catena-network.co.uk)